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Interview with Cypriots Anarchists regarding the crisis

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Key points from the conversation between Radio 98FM (Greek alternative radio) and Syspirosi Atakton (Anarchist group in Cyprus). [Italiano]

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***98FM:* How did you see the “No” from the parliament?**

Syspirosi Atakton: We felt that the NO, from politicians, was like a reflex because as it turned out later there was no “Plan B” nor a path for change, so they continued the negotiations hoping for something better. When the neoliberal president was elected he was expecting that Plan A would be the same austerity measures applied in other countries. He was caught off guard and that is mainly why they voted NO. They wanted to keep their deposits intact and their support for the big capital. All in all, the NO was not something revolutionary, they were serving their interests and their deposits. All those reports on the heroic NO of the Cypriots was more like a fairytale that was easy to sell.

We want some more details about society in Cyprus.

The following points were made to explain how an environment was created with which social acceptance for the current system was achieved: In Cyprus for a number of years all the political parties and trade unions have been working together to gain social acceptance for the current system. There was stability in employment and some raises in salaries. However, this was nothing compared to the profits made by the banking system and the tourism industry. This led to a general social acceptance of the way the banking system worked.

Since 1974 there was a flow of foreign capital into Cyprus that created the bubble of the banking system. At the beginning it was from Lebanon, then from Yugoslavia and more recently Russia. The political parties of the left were supporting this and therefore there was no critisism of this system from any political parties nor mainstream media.

The social acceptance of the banking system and the events of Mari (a big explosion at a naval base which killed 13 people) after which there seemed to be an alliance between the neo-nazi party (ELAM) and the neoliberals (DISI) against the then left-wing government, had a great part in the rise of DISI in the presidential elections but also in generating the opinion that there was only one solution to our problem (austerity measures and help from the Troika).

What about the archbishop and his offer to the State of the "belongings" of the church.

At first we need to state that the same person said similar things during the Annan referendum. He said he would give every refugee of the war of 1974 a plot of land if they voted NO. He never gave anything to anyone!! The truth is that the archbishop is really close to neo-Nazi and nationalistic views and he is a supporter of the current president. The church has 800m of property of estates. They own hotels, the Hellenic bank in Cyprus and KEO (local beer industry). But at the same time they don't have the required liquidity to help and we doubt they can sell their property with the economic imbalance in Cyprus.

What about natural gas?

There is the common belief that the extraction of natural gas will save Cyprus from economic destruction. But until now we have not had any concrete information as to what the actual value of it is or whether we will extract it in 2, 5 or even 10 years. They are using the potential for natural gas in order to try and keep people calm and avoid organised resistance. Another important piece of information on this matter is that the left party AKEL, which was in government for the last 5 years (until the end of February), made agreements and (new) alliances with Israel regarding natural gas. As a consequence, Cyprus lost alliances with the countries of the Middle East, like Syria and Egypt who were our natural allies. In the end Israel re-established their connections/alliances with Turkey and now it remains to be seen whether Israel is actually our ally or not.

Our mainstream media were presenting the situation in Cyprus as disastrous. Empty supermarkets, pharmacies out of stock etc. Was it true?

We had these pictures in our mainstream media as well, but as it turned out later those pictures were taken from different situations and potentially in different countries. The media were trying to create a sense of panic and in a way terrorise people, so that they would accept the cuts as the only solution. The truth is that people were calm enough. There was food and medicines and everything was working well except businesses like petrol stations that required cash to provide for petrol as people were only using their credit cards.

What do you think will happen now? Will people rise up because of the situation?

We expect that people will go onto the streets. Two years ago unemployment was estimated at 1%. Now it is 14% and we expect it to be double in 6 months. It will be impossible to keep people calm and reassured with rates of unemployment always rising. Let's take as an example people working in the banks, which until now was a really safe and well-paid job. People will get fired and they won't be able to pay their debts for their cars or their houses or even their kids' education. We don't think the current system will be able to control the anger of these people. Already during this week we have seen different things in the streets. Change is imminent.

The duration of the conversation was around 1h15. For more information or questions you can contact us anytime

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